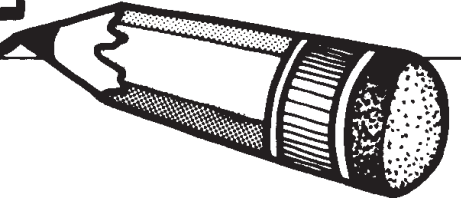


# Parenting Pipeline



*A newsletter for parents of second-grade children  
from the North Dakota State University Extension Service*



## Physical Development in Middle Childhood

Second-graders will usually grow 2 to 3 inches in a year. Their bodies, hands and feet begin to lengthen. Even vision may change as their eyes develop.

Girls are usually ahead of the boys in physical development. Losing teeth and getting the 6-year molars are always exciting events for this age, even when they've lost several teeth before. Most children view losing teeth as a sign of growing up.

Your child's coordination is improving. Hand-eye coordination is getting better. This is evident in skills like skating, jumping rope, playing ball and riding a bike.

Fine motor development is also making progress. You will notice this in your child's handwriting, drawing and art projects.

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Active play such as running, jumping, wrestling and chasing are still very important to your child's development. Most adults tend to view these activities as simply playing. But developing muscles, learning new skills, gaining a sense of accomplishment, cooperating with friends and solving problems are all natural outcomes of play.

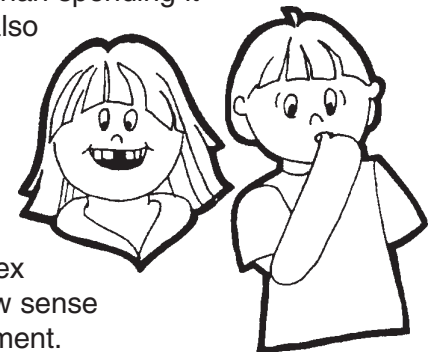
Although children need and enjoy active play, they need quiet time as well. Your child's reading capabilities should be developing to a point where she can use quiet time to practice this new and important skill.

As your child grows physically, people increase their expectations. At times this will be a welcome experience, but at other times it may be too much pressure. Occasionally stomachaches, thumb sucking and pants wetting may occur when your child is overtired or under stress. Don't make a big deal about it. Try to determine the source of stress and help your child manage it.

## Emotional Development

Each year your child is making progress toward becoming an independent person. As he approaches age 8, he will be able to understand many concepts in a way he couldn't before.

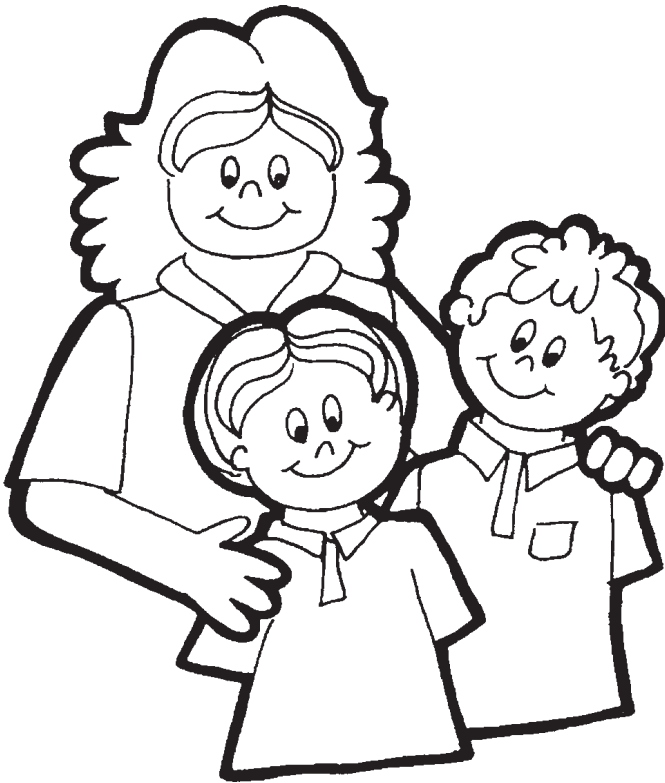
Your child will begin to understand the concept of saving money rather than spending it immediately. He will also begin to understand the idea of taking care of himself. These are examples of more complex thinking patterns, and with these complex thoughts comes a new sense of emotional development.



Activities your child participates in are important, but now it's also a question of how well he does compared with others and how others are affected by his actions.

Children this age question and evaluate themselves. Children may hear the words *smart, dumb, ugly, good*. They can accept that they are wrong or have made a mistake but have a harder time accepting being judged as bad or dumb because of the mistake.

It's important to separate these two concepts for your child. If Jeffrey has broken a dish, avoid lines such as, "You are so stupid. Don't you know better?" or "How could you be so dumb?" Instead say, "Accidents happen. What could you do next time so this won't happen?"



Separate the love for your child from the misbehavior when she hits another child. Try, "I can see you are angry, but hitting hurts people. No hitting. What could you do next time to get a turn without hitting?" This method will help your child begin to identify and understand the powerful emotions she is experiencing. At the same time she will develop problem-solving skills and not be judged as a failure.

Your child will try to protect her ego by escaping the source of hurt or pain. This may be done by crying, running away, lying or blaming others. In her mind, this was necessary to avoid the hurt. Avoid labeling her as bad and using lines such as, "Shame on you." Instead, point out what is happening and offer suggestions as to how to handle her feelings. This is an important teachable moment for parents. Your child needs to learn how to handle her emotions. Remember to set a good example.

You may also notice empathy from your child. She may display great pleasure when someone else is happy or wince when someone's finger gets pinched in a door.

Middle childhood (ages 5-10) is a time when children enjoy being a part of the family and express it by making gifts for those they care about. Encourage these activities, display this work and avoid criticizing their efforts.

This strong sense of belonging that comes from your family is now a strong need at school as well. At this age the need to belong outside of the family can be met by exploring clubs such as 4-H and Scouts or activities such as gymnastics or skating. These early and positive group experiences boost your child's self-esteem, provide special time for interaction and help teach your child to develop secure and fun relationships outside the family.

This newsletter is published for North Dakota families with second-graders by the NDSU Extension Service and distributed through your county extension office. See your extension agent for more parenting information and other nutrition, youth and family programs.

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